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Agenda item 29

Effects of atomic radiation

Report of the Special Political and Decolonization Committee (Fourth Committee)

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I. Introduction

1. At its 2nd plenary meeting, on 18 September 2009, the General Assembly, on the recommendation of the General Committee, decided to include in the agenda of its sixty-fourth session the item entitled "Effects of atomic radiation" and to allocate it to the Special Political and Decolonization Committee (Fourth Committee).

2. The Fourth Committee considered the item and held a general debate on it at its 11th meeting, on 16 October 2009, and took action on the item at its 14th meeting, on 22 October 2009 (see A/C.4/64/SR.11 and 14).

3. For its consideration of the item, the Committee had before it the letter dated 10 July 2009 from the Chairman of the United Nations Scientific Committee on the Effects of Atomic Radiation addressed to the President of the General Assembly (A/64/223).

4. At the 11th meeting, on 16 October, the representative of Canada, in his capacity as Chairperson of the United Nations Scientific Committee on the Effects of Atomic Radiation, made a statement on the work of the Committee (see A/C.4/64/SR.11).

II. Consideration of draft resolution A/C.4/64/L.8

5. At the 14th meeting, on 22 October, the representative of Canada, on behalf of Albania, Australia, Austria, Belarus, Belgium, Canada, China, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Japan, Kazakhstan, Malaysia, Marshall Islands, Mexico, Monaco, Poland, the Russian Federation, Singapore, Slovakia, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, Thailand, Togo, Ukraine and the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland,

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introduced a draft resolution entitled "Effects of atomic radiation" (A/C.4/64/L.8) and orally revised it as follows: in operative paragraph 14, the word "full" was deleted.

6. Subsequently, Argentina, Costa Rica, the Czech Republic, Ecuador, India, Lithuania and Pakistan joined in sponsoring the draft resolution.

7. At the same meeting, the Committee was informed that there were no programme budget implications relating to the draft resolution.

8. Also at its 14th meeting, the Committee adopted draft resolution A/C.4/64/L.8 without a vote (see para. 9), as orally revised.

III. Recommendation of the Special Political and Decolonization Committee (Fourth Committee)

9. The Special Political and Decolonization Committee (Fourth Committee) recommends to the General Assembly the adoption of the following draft resolution:

Effects of atomic radiation

The General Assembly,

Recalling its resolution 913 (X) of 3 December 1955, by which it established the United Nations Scientific Committee on the Effects of Atomic Radiation, and its subsequent resolutions on the subject, including resolution 63/89 of 5 December 2008, in which, inter alia, it requested the Scientific Committee to continue its work,

Taking note with appreciation of the work of the Scientific Committee, and noting the letter from its Chairman to the President of the General Assembly,[1]

Reaffirming the desirability of the Scientific Committee continuing its work,

Concerned about the potentially harmful effects on present and future generations resulting from the levels of radiation to which mankind and the environment are exposed,

Conscious of the continuing need to examine and compile information about atomic and ionizing radiation and to analyse its effects on mankind and the environment, and conscious also of the increased volume, complexity and diversity of that information,

Noting the views expressed by Member States at its sixty-fourth session with regard to the work of the Scientific Committee,

Emphasizing the vital need for sustainable, appropriate and predictable resourcing, as well as efficient management, of the work of the secretariat of the Scientific Committee to arrange the annual sessions and coordinate the development of documents based on scientific reviews from Member States of the sources of ionizing radiation and its effects on human health and the environment,

Recalling the deep concern of the Scientific Committee expressed in the reports on its fifty-fifth and fifty-sixth sessions that reliance on a single post at the Professional level in its secretariat had left the Committee seriously vulnerable and had hampered the efficient implementation of its approved programme of work,[2]

Recalling also the comprehensive report of the Secretary-General on the financial and administrative implications of increased membership of the Scientific Committee, staffing of its professional secretariat and methods to ensure sufficient, assured and predictable funding,[3]

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[1] A/64/223.

[2] *Official Records of the General Assembly, Sixty-second Session, Supplement No. 46* (A/62/46), para. 5; and ibid., *Sixty-third Session, Supplement No. 46* (A/63/46), para. 11.

[3] A/63/478.

Recalling its request to the Secretary-General, in formulating his proposed programme budget for the biennium 2010-2011, to consider all options, including the possibility of internal reallocation, to provide the Scientific Committee with the resources outlined in paragraphs 48 to 50 of his report,[1]

1. *Commends* the United Nations Scientific Committee on the Effects of Atomic Radiation for the valuable contribution it has been making in the course of the past fifty-four years, since its inception, to wider knowledge and understanding of the levels, effects and risks of ionizing radiation, and for fulfilling its original mandate with scientific authority and independence of judgement;

2. *Reaffirms* the decision to maintain the present functions and independent role of the Scientific Committee;

3. *Requests* the Scientific Committee to continue its work, including its important activities to increase knowledge of the levels, effects and risks of ionizing radiation from all sources;

4. *Endorses* the intentions and plans of the Scientific Committee, including those outlined in the letter from its Chairman to the President of the General Assembly,[2] for conducting its present programme of work of scientific review and assessment on behalf of the General Assembly, encourages the Committee at its earliest convenience to submit the related reports, including assessments of levels of radiation from energy production and the effects on human health and the environment, and on the attribution of health effects due to radiation exposure, and to initiate, as far as possible, work on the remaining previously endorsed topics, and requests the Committee to submit plans for its future programme of work to the Assembly at its sixty-fifth session;

5. *Requests* the Scientific Committee to continue at its next session the review of the important questions in the field of ionizing radiation and to report thereon to the General Assembly at its sixty-fifth session;

6. *Re-emphasizes* the need for the Scientific Committee to hold regular sessions on an annual basis so that its report can reflect the latest developments and findings in the field of ionizing radiation and thereby provide updated information for dissemination among all States;

7. *Expresses its appreciation* for the assistance rendered to the Scientific Committee by Member States, the specialized agencies, the International Atomic Energy Agency and non-governmental organizations, and invites them to increase their cooperation in this field;

8. *Invites* the Scientific Committee to continue its consultations with scientists and experts from interested Member States in the process of preparing its future scientific reports, and requests the Secretariat to facilitate such consultations;

9. *Welcomes*, in this context, the readiness of Member States to provide the Scientific Committee with relevant information on the effects of ionizing radiation in affected areas, and invites the Committee to analyse and give due consideration to such information, particularly in the light of its own findings;

10. *Invites* Member States, the organizations of the United Nations system and non-governmental organizations concerned to provide further relevant data about doses, effects and risks from various sources of radiation, which would

greatly help in the preparation of future reports of the Scientific Committee to the General Assembly,

11. *Requests* the United Nations Environment Programme to continue providing support for the effective conduct of the work of the Scientific Committee and for the dissemination of its findings to the General Assembly, the scientific community and the public;

12. *Urges* the United Nations Environment Programme to continue to review and strengthen the funding of the Scientific Committee, pursuant to paragraph 13 of resolution 63/89, and to continue to seek out and consider temporary funding mechanisms to complement existing ones, and, in that context, encourages Member States to consider making voluntary contributions to the general trust fund established by the Executive Director of the United Nations Environment Programme to receive and manage voluntary contributions to support the work of the Committee;

13. *Reminds* the Scientific Committee, as directed in paragraph 17 of resolution 63/89, to continue its reflection on how its current, as well as its potentially revised, membership could best support its essential work, including by developing, with the participation of the observer countries, detailed, objective and transparent criteria and indicators to be applied equitably to present and future members alike, and to report its conclusions by the end of June 2010;

14. *Welcomes* the attendance of Belarus, Finland, Pakistan, the Republic of Korea, Spain and Ukraine as observers at the fifty-sixth session of the Scientific Committee, invites each of those States to designate one scientist to attend, as an observer, the fifty-seventh session of the Committee, and resolves to take a decision on the membership of the Committee, including the membership of those six States, once a decision on resource allocation has been made, and after the fifty-seventh session of the Scientific Committee, but no later than the end of the sixty-fourth session of the General Assembly.